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Butting In

Tobacco Control Update

from the Division of Population Health and Information

"Excuse me, but here's something that might interest you..."

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New York smoking rates plummet

The New York City Department of Health announced May 14 that smoking rates were down 11% from 2002 to 2003.

The decline represents 100,000 fewer smokers and marks the most significant one year drop ever recorded. Smoking rates declined in all ages, ethnicities, genders and boroughs.

Health Commissioner Thomas R. Frieden, MD, remarked, "This is extraordinarily good news for the health of New Yorkers. At least 30,000 premature deaths will be prevented."

Health experts attribute the decline in smoking to higher cigarette taxes, smokefree workplace laws and smoking cessation programs. Only 19% of New Yorkers still smoke.

"Mayor Bloomberg, Commissioner Frieden, and the New York City Council deserve enormous credit for standing up to Big Tobacco," says Joe Cherner, president of SmokeFree Educational Services, Inc. "Their action has made New York a cleaner place to work and a more pleasurable place to play."

Source: Joe Cherner, GlobalInk

Bans make quitting easier

Stringent smoke-free restrictions and labelling policies are very effective in motivating smokers to quit.

A study released May 31 shows 36% of former smokers cited smoke-free policies as a motivation to quit smoking. Former smokers who quit following the introduction of a total smoke-free bylaw were three times more likely to cite smoking bylaws as a motivation to quit, compared to former smokers who quit prior to the bylaw.

"More stringent smoke-free policies and bylaws do get more bang for your buck when introducing stricter policies," said lead author David Hammond, a PhD student at the University of Waterloo's psychology department.

The study also found that 31% of participants reported that cigarette warning labels had motivated them to quit. Former smokers who quit following the introduction of the new, larger graphic warning labels were three times more likely to cite the warnings as a quitting influence than former smokers who quit prior to their introduction.

Finally, 38% of all former smokers surveyed reported that smoke-free policies helped them remain abstinent and 27% reported that warning labels helped them.

The study surveyed 191 former smokers (103 females and 88 males with an average age of 39) in southwestern Ontario in Oct. 2001. It is in the *Canadian Journal of Public Health*.

Source: David Hammond, University Waterloo

Reported by Sharon Lem, Toronto Sun


The World Health Organization says that currently somewhere in the world a person dies every six-and-a-half seconds, and many more fall ill from tobacco use.

Tobacco deaths in poor countries to reach seven million per year by 2030

The rapid rise in smoking in many developing countries will have devastating consequences, a new report says.

By 2030, the number of deaths resulting from tobacco use will reach seven million a year in the developing world, the authors of a review in *Thorax* have estimated (2004;59:623-30).

The report says that the developing world is facing a rapidly growing epidemic of tobacco use. Rates began rising in the early 1970s, and by 1995 about 82% of all



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smokers were in the developing world. In 2000, 2.41 million deaths in poorer countries were related to smoking.

The authors, led by Dr. A.S.M. Abdullah of the department of community medicine at the University of Hong Kong, said, "Tobacco control will need to be a priority for policy makers in developing countries if a substantial impact is to be made."

Awareness of the health hazards of tobacco is low in developing nations. In 1996, two-thirds of adult Chinese smokers believed that cigarettes did little or no harm. Low levels of education in many poorer countries also make it harder for people to understand the hazards.

The authors note that while the public health community is busy trying to reduce tobacco use, the tobacco industry continues to market its products aggressively.

"The industry also minimizes the health impacts of tobacco, even in developed countries where the problem has been well documented. (They) are also investing in developing countries by building manufacturing plants," the authors wrote.

Source: Roger Dobson,
BMJ 2004;329:71 (10 July), doi:10.1136/bmj.329.7457.71-a
<http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/329/7457/71-a?ecoll>

CORPORATE CORNER

BAT boss spills beans

The tobacco industry's mantra has always been that it doesn't encourage people to smoke and that tobacco companies just compete with other tobacco companies for brand share of an already determined market. The claim has consistently been that advertising and sponsorship affect brand preference, but not overall consumption.

However, recent comments by British American Tobacco (BAT) Australia's Director of Corporate and Regulatory Affairs, John Galligan, to an Australian Senate Committee were a refreshing break from the litany. The Committee is examining various tobacco-related issues including a private member's Bill that would deny public election funding to political parties or candidates who accept donations from the tobacco industry.

Galligan told the Senate that it would be "prejudicial to us carrying out the same level of political engagement that our competitors or other companies within the

business community might enjoy". Galligan could not see why "we should be singled out".

When a Committee member pointed out that "all your competitors would be in the same boat", Galligan replied, "When I say 'competitors', we are out there competing for consumers right across the spectrum. Regardless of whether they are buying milk, cheese or tobacco products, the consumer has a fixed amount of disposable income, and we would like to compete for the dollars of the consumers along with any other fast moving consumer good company."

Of course this is, and always has been, the case, but it's a change to hear the industry admit it.

The full transcript is at <http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/senate/commtee/S7733.pdf>

Source: Jonathan Liberman, GlobalInk

Smoking linked to impotence

Although the connection between smoking and impotence has been disputed, a 2001 study concluded that the two things do appear to be correlated.

Writing in Preventive Medicine, researchers from the University of California at Irvine said that a review of the literature showed that 40 percent of impotent men studied were smokers, compared with only 28 percent of men over-all.

"Our review shows a clear relationship," wrote Drs. Tammy O. Tengs and Nathaniel D. Osgood. "Impotent men were significantly more likely to be current smokers than men in the general population."

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The researchers based their conclusions on a review of 19 studies that reported the smoking habits of 3,819 impotent men.

Source: Eric Nagourney, A New Warning for Male Smokers [06/26/01]

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